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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this article is to clarify the place of myth in literature and the English curriculum. Conceived of as symbolic form, myth underpins all human expression, as a way of organizing human response to reality. It holds a central place in literature and can make clear the intimate connections between history and literature because its larger pattern reveals the constant interplay between social mythology and timeless archetypes. It is the task of the English teacher to enable students to identify and utilize myths in their own thinking, reading, and writing through the use of exercises and readings involving exploration and identification of myths. Seven appendixes prepared by the study group on myth are included and address themselves to such issues as how the study of myth might affect teaching style, training in myth criticism, effects of translation on cultural myths, modern psychoanalytic approach to myth, problems in modern readings of myth, and accountability of education for social myths. (LL)

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Some Meanings and Uses of Myth

by

Albert L. Lavin

There could be something of "coals to Newcastle" about the decision to write on the nature and role of myth for an audience already so familiar with this subject, but despite the intense modern interest in this field, very little has been done to translate its meanings into effective classroom teaching. Since myth has been defined in many ways and put to many uses, my primary purpose here is to help clarify its place both within literature and, beyond that, within the English curriculum as a whole. No one statement can free myth from the vexing ambiguities associated with the term today; these notes simply attempt to disengage it from some of our fixed scruples. The treatment here is general, perhaps more speculative than immediately practical, but subsequent dialogue at Dartmouth may begin to discover new and better ways to make myth serve the teaching of literature.

In the past using myth as an organizing principle in the curriculum often meant foisting concepts on literary works. When "thematic units" were fashionable, teachers devised universal themes, and books were used to illustrate these categories. Such an approach was wrong-headed from the start because it reduced the concrete experience of literature to some cerebral, extra-literary generality. Though this "great ideas" approach still survives, it is no longer the prevailing obsession, and while it may be a valid technique for certain courses in cultural history, even there it should remain subordinate to some pattern of self-discovery more connatural to the discipline or disciplines involved. Themes extrapolated from literature are essentially propositional statements quite remote from archetypes, which are typical or recurring images embedded in the dramatic structure of concrete art works. Even when we use the more precise and subtle probes of valid criticism, we find ourselves talking <u>about</u> the artifact, at least once removed from our poetic knowledge of its life. But in this way, as opposed to the thematic approach, we are directing the student's attention on puddings and not

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recipes, we are engaging the reader with myths in their natural settings, in their sensuous expression in the drama, fiction, and poetry to which they give form and movement. We need, then, to teach myth from within, inductively, leading students to a sense of the myth-making power and continuity, from Homer to Flannery O'Connor, from Oedipus Rex to A Separate Peace.

To do this we need a working field theory sufficiently catholic to include the valid methods of several forms of criticism, a context wide enough to develop the reader's awareness of genre as well as texture, of the author as well as the speaker, of voice as well as the judgement it implies, and of literature as communication as well as communicn. Currently no one school of criticism offers us a single theory sufficient to account for the multiple levels of meaning in the literary work, though the recent tendencies toward pluralism and synthesis are hopeful signs. Among many significant earlier contributions, the theories of Richards and Burke and the practice of Blackmur and Trilling are outstanding examples of combining methods. More recently, in the work of critics like Northrop Frye and Wayne Booth we have seen the development toward the kind of synthesis which may lead us beyond what have now become weary dichotomies between form and content, between aesthetic and moral value. Frye describes this critical impasse of the 1950's in his Anatomy of Criticism:

> The modern student of critical theory is faced with a body of rhetoricians who speak of texture and frontal assaults, with students of history who deal with traditions and sources, with critics using material from psychology and anthropology, with Aristotelians, Coleridgians, Thomists, Freudians, Jungians, Marxists, with students of myths, rituals, archetypes, metaphors, ambiguities, and significant forms. The student must either admit the principle of polysemous meaning, or choose one of these groups and then try to prove that all the others are less legitimate. The former is the way of scholarship, and leads to the advancement of learning; the latter is the way of pedantry, and gives us a wide choice of goals, the most conspicuous today being fantastical learning, or myth criticism, contentious learning, or historical criticism, and delicate criticism learning, or "new" criticism.[1]

Of all the methods it is the New Criticism or formal approach which has most influenced English teachers, though it appears that in spite of their college

exposure to the methods of close reading[2] all too few secondary teachers have learned to explicate a literary text. At any rate, New Criticism continues to be a major force in the universities, in the literary magazines and professional journals, and in the high school curriculum. This emphasis on the formal aspects of literature protects us against potentially undisciplined uses of literature - the nationalistic and solipsistic vagaries we have seen in the past - but it can severely narrow the student's reading experience. Practical criticism can elevate his reading habits, but it should not stop at the level of executive techniques that is somewhere short of the major meanings form can empower in him. A full reading of a great work of literature should give him a sense of actuality almost outside form itself; the imaginative act required involves the process of literal belief and its poetic suspension, the problem of distance - being "out far and in deep" - and all the equilibrium between subjective experience and communal form. In reading the "poem itself" the student encounters a structure which reveals the mood of the speaker, the mind of the author and, to some degree, the mind of a culture; if he reads well, he will enhance his understanding of patterns in art and in life and he may experience occasions when he can even get "the fly out of the flybottle."

A fuller knowledge of myth may provide the teacher of English with the answers he needs most. Conceived of as symbolic form, myth underpins all human expression; as a way of organizing the human response to reality, it holds a central place in literature. Myth is a fundamental aspect of the way we process experience, compose it, and give it shape in the forms of language. It should enable us to order our discipline, for it can give scope and depth to our teaching of literature, providing perspective and continuity to the literary types, the conventions, and the techniques we teach. It can increase our power and discernment of language, deepening our understanding of metaphor. It can make clear the intimate connections between history and literature because its larger pattern reveals the constant interplay between social mythology and timeless archetypes. As it extends

awareness of language as a symbolic process, myth leads the mind to interdisciplinary analogies with man's other systems of metaphor, and by doing so, it frees us from the real dangers of "juiceless formalism"[3] and narrow professionalism.

Myth in language gives voice to the whole phenomenon of man; its narrative structure is a mode of knowing and metaphor is its characteristic device. We know that symbols, mathematical or verbal, constitute the unique language men use to conceive their universe, though the content of a symbol is only partly determined by that universe itself. Even scientific symbol systems tell us more about the shape of man's thought than about the events his "objective" analogies attempt to contain; furthermore, it is clear now that philosophy itself cannot be understood by merely determining the object on which its methods are centered. Unlike science or philosophy, myth makes no attempt to explain the outside world. It is an imaginative construction that creates a human world that will or should exist. Myth orders individual and communal life, forming the vision of a human landscape where none exists; its outline appears wherever men live, but attains its ultimate paradigm in language and its more permanent expression in literature.

During the past hundred years the significance of myth has attracted the best minds from a variety of fields, for they have found in its encompassing strategies some of the keys to history, psychology, linguistics, and anthropology. When we think of this development, the names of Frazer, Freud, Jung, Muller, and Cassirer come to mind, as well as modern literary critics such as Auerbach, Frye, Bush, Fergusson, Wheelwright, Tillyard, Bodkin, Graves, Campbell, and Fiedler. A brief summary of three representative modern uses of myth will serve as an illustration of its current relevance to the teaching of English. The first example relates myth to language; the second relates myth and literature; and the third moves outward from literature to interdisciplinary studies.

Ernst Cassirer studied the nature of mythic conception from the standpoint of logic and epistemology, and his theory of symbolic form places myth in its widest possible context, providing the kind of perspective we need before moving back again within the more familiar boundaries of contemporary criticism and its

connection with the art of teaching. In his Myth and Language Cassirer contends that these components were man's earliest symbolic achievements and as modes of expression derive from the same verbal and mental roots. In her essay "On the New Definition of Symbol," Susanne Langer describes this aspect of Cassirer's work:

> Cassirer himself considered the semantic functions that belong to scientific symbols as a special development, which occurred under the influence of language, by virtue of its inherent generality together with its significant character. But symbolization as such he traced further back. His notion of "symbol" was more primitive than that of a sign used by common consent to stand for an associated concept; in one sense of the word, a sound, a mark, object, or event could be a symbol to a person, without the person's consciously going from it to its meaning. This is the basic concept in his theory of myth.[4]

In his chapter on metaphor in Myth and Language, Cassirer defines the development of myth, language, and art in a manner that clearly resembles Frye's theory of literature as a progression from magic to myth to convention. Cassirer writes:

> Myth, language, and art begin as a concrete, undivided unity, which is only gradually resolved into a triad of independent modes of spiritual creativity. Consequently, the same mythic animation and hypostatization which is bestowed upon the words of human speech is originally accorded to images, to every kind of artistic representation. Especially in the magical realm, word magic is everywhere accompanied by picture magic. The image, too, achieves its purely representative, specifically "aesthetic" function only as the magic circle with which mythical consciousness surrounds it is broken, and it is recognized not as a mythicomagical form, but as a particular formulation.
>
> But although language and art both become emancipated, in this fashion, from their native soil of mythical thinking, the ideal, spiritual unity of the two is reasserted upon a higher level. If language is to grow into a vehicle of thought, an expression of concepts and judgements, this evolution can be achieved only at the price of forgoing the wealth and fullness of immediate experience. In the end, what is left of the concrete sense and feeling content it once possessed is little more than a bare skeleton. But there is one intellectual realm in which the word not only preserves its original creative power, but is ever renewing it; in which it

> undergoes a sort of constant palingenesis, at once a sensuous and a spiritual reincarnation. This regeneration is achieved as language becomes an avenue of artistic expression.[5]

Northrop Frye's theories of archetype, mode, genre, and symbol operate within what is for us the safer or more appropriate closure of literary conventions: "The things that happen in myth are things that happen only in stories; they are in a self-contained literary world," but his general theory of myth complements Cassirer's. Cassirer would affirm this statement of Frye:

> As a type of story, myth is a form of verbal art, and belongs to the world of art, and unlike science, it deals not with the world that man contemplates but with the world man creates. The total form of art, so to speak, is a world whose content is nature but whose form is human; hence when it 'imitates' nature it assimilates nature to human forms. The world of art is human in perspective, a world in which the sun continues to rise and set long after science has explained that its rising and setting are illusions. And myth too, makes a systematic attempt to see nature in human shape; it does not simply roam at large in nature like the folk tale.[6]

Frye has done a masterful job of organizing fictional patterns. His theory makes myth serve poetry. He has constructed an architectonic view of literature, standing back, as it were, from the results of earlier twentieth century criticism to gain a perspective atop its main currents. His effort has been to synthesize the various "armed visions" and to reconcile the divisions between aesthetic and moral value. His extraordinary learning and fine judgement have enabled him to extend modern criticism toward new heights just when its energies seemed spent. What is perhaps most important is the degree of success he has had in synthesis. It may, for some time to come, prove to be a framework viable enough for teachers in the center of the humanities, facing a society undergoing knowledge explosions and media "implosions." (It is interesting to note that another bold humanist from Toronto, Marshall McLuhan, has, like Frye, pushed the notion of form to its limits. In the process of extending aesthetic perspective to technological media,

he has continued to apply a definition of myth that embraces electronic as well as verbal extensions of man: "... an instant vision of a process extended in time.") If we mean what we say when we affirm the ultimate practicality of theory, then we cannot afford to neglect such creative scholarship and such humane criticism as we find in Frye's design.

In the closing section of his Anatomy of Criticism, Frye comments upon an assumption that has been operating throughout this paper:

> That something else is the confused swirl of new activities today associated with such words as communication, symbolism, semantics, linguistics, metalinguistics, pragmatics, cybernetics, and the ideas generated by and around Cassirer, Korzybsky, and dozens of others . . . but it is clear to me that literary criticism has a central place in all this activity.[7]

As he goes on to discuss the meaning of a liberal education and the place of literature and literary criticism in the city of man, notice his emphasis on a theory of action:

> It seems better to try to get clear of all such conflicts, attaching ourselves to Arnold's other axiom that "culture seeks to do away with classes". The ethical purpose of a liberal education is to liberate, which can only mean to make one capable of conceiving society as free, classless, and urbane. No such society exists, which is one reason why a liberal education must be deeply concerned with works of the imagination. The imaginative element in works of art, again, lifts them clear of the bondage of history. Anything that emerges from the total experience of criticism to form part of a liberal education becomes, by virtue of the fact, part of the emancipated and humane community of culture, whatever its original reference. Thus liberal education liberates the works of culture themselves as well as the mind they educate. The corruption out of which human art has been constructed will always remain in the art, but the imaginative quality of the art preserves it in its corruption, like the corpse of a saint. No discussion of beauty can confine itself to the formal relations of the isolated work of art; it must consider, too, the participation of the work of art in the vision of the goal of social effort, the idea of complete and classless civilization. This idea of complete civilization is also the implicit moral standard to which ethical

> criticism always refers, something very different from any system of morals.[8]

The third example moves out of literature proper and into the realm of interdisciplinary studies; it is Henry Nash Smith's essay, one you may be familiar with, in which he suggest an answer to the question in his title: "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?" Smith's article treats in detail some of the problems Frye raises in a general way in The Educated Imagination and The Anatomy of Criticism. His thesis is that both the historian and the literary critic have a stake in the whole culture and therefore a responsibility to study literature within the double-vision of art and society. If what we know about our culture, about ourselves, is to be free of gross distortion, if we are to achieve some adequate grasp of the interplay between mass culture and unique works of literature, then we must bring about some transaction of methods from social history and criticism. Though Smith does not explicitly refer to myth in this passage, it takes on importance in his method of studying the general culture.

> Despite the sincere desire of some of the leaders in the movement to recognize the intimate relation between a work of art and its social setting, the effect of the New Criticism in practice has been to establish an apparently impassable chasm between the facts of our existence in contemporary society and the values of art. In this respect, the philosophical position of the New Criticism seems to me to bear a striking resemblance to Edgar Allen Poe's conception that art belongs to a non-empirical realm of 'ideality' totally divorced from the sordid or commonplace facts of everyday life. The root of the matter is the belief in an extreme dualism of nature and spirit. If society is taken to be a part of the natural order, and art is assigned to the realm of the spirit, it becomes impossible to relate art (except negatively) to the actual culture within which it occurs.
>
> We are no better off if we turn to the social sciences for help in seeing the culture as a whole. We merely find society without art instead of art without society. The literary critic would cut esthetic value loose from social fact; the social scientist, despite his theoretical recognition that art is an important aspect of culture, uses techniques of research which make it difficult or impossible for him to deal with the states of consciousness embodied in serious art.[9]

Statements such as these three on myth in language, literature, and society indicate definite ways myth may help us attain a unified conception of our discipline. Myth is not content, though we may choose to regard bodies of mythology as such. Like literature and its other self, composing, myth is primarily an act of knowing and making, and like these other conceptual activities, it is expressed in language. This does not suggest that myth should be the ultimate principle of organization for the English curriculum, but it does suggest that from the outset a commitment to this kind of context puts emphasis where it belongs - on myth and language as basic modes of symbolic transformation. Since language splits into imaginative and scientific uses when cultures attain written languages, myth prepares for a contrastive stress upon the relations between oral and written systems of language, a strand the teacher will be emphasizing in composition and language instruction. And it prepares for the teaching of literary types or of any form of discourse in the humanistic perspective of both social and literary myth, for it allows appropriate, if subordinate, emphasis upon history and technology in a cultural mode of thought, more comprehensive in its teaching implications than most versions of formal criticism.

At the present time myth is often included in the high school curriculum in order to explain some of the selections students will study, works like The Odyssey and Oedipus Rex. In some cases, a unit on myths is included because they are "part of our heritage" or because "they live today." Ninth graders are issued a supplementary text on Greek myths, and they learn a smattering of twice-told tales about "them gods that were once believed in" when the world was young. I suppose this is harmless enough, even helpful if this information were put to some better use later on, as it surely is in some schools. But the usual result is that few students come to terms with the nature of myth as a cohesive framework for all the genre, traditions, and conventions of the literature they will study. Fewer still come to recognize the universality of myth-making or see its power to give them a sense of history, which is to say, a sense of identity. The cause of this failure is, I believe, in the teacher's failure as a philospher of his subject. Many of

the same teachers who bemoan the fragmentation of the English curriculum have neither the interest nor the background to place their subject in perspective. Many of them regard myth as an esoteric and slightly spurious undertaking, one that is suitable for graduate studies but has little relevance to teaching. We often minimize the significance of this failure of English teachers to know the structure of their [illegible] and to grasp its place in the whole anatomy of knowing. Yet the problem it creates becomes crucial for the student who has a deep need for a coherent view of what he learns.

In recent years some fundamental changes have been taking place in the field of English. Teachers in our discipline in increasing numbers have reached such a point of intensity that they can often be distinguished from their colleagues by the symptoms of excitement and purpose. The old image of the English teacher as "grammatical gendarme" is no longer with us. Even the fatigue from evaluating compositions cannot prevent the self-examination, the acquisition of new knowledge, and the changes in perception which mark our field today. In my own school district the majority of English teachers have, during the past few years, expressed a growing discontent with a literature program that has received national recognition. The program is a good one and makes more sense of the terms "structure" add "sequence" than most curriculum documents do, but the teachers who are uneasy with the results of this plan, are, I believe, on the right track. In the last decade many English departments have been developing such programs in literature, clear and precise in their underlying assumptions (no matter how securely narrow) about the meaning of structure as it is unfolded in works (arrayed in a sequence from the relatively simple to the relatively complex) illustrating the formal properties from genre to point of view, from voice and tone to their embodiment in language choices. These syllabi are commendable and deserve the imprimatur of the local New Critic, who was often consultant on the project; the trend they reflect marked a necessary step forward, but when the majority of schools establish such a design - if they decide to - and then live

with it for a few years, they will, I think, find that something is missing. They may have a series of timeless moments, of genres and conventions, but they will have located literature in a place of pure form where it becomes its own source. Some of the colleagues I referred to would, I think, share Hayden Carruth's view when he says that "Today, in looking back, we are likely to conclude, somewhat shyly, that the socially oriented critics, like Edmund Wilson, Alfred Kazin, and Irving Howe, who did not push the theory of criticism so far, were nevertheless fundamentally more constructive, that is, more useful in defining literature as a normative element in the process of civilization."[10] These teachers are aware, too, that the education of the future should move rapidly toward a more interdisciplinary design, and since English is the language in which we think about everything, the movement might best begin with this discipline. And like teachers in many fields today they see that similarities between the "two cultures" are as important as their differences, that the analogies among all the symbol systems are begging for a thorough study by teachers.

Recent developments within the discipline of English offer promising, though largely untested, answers. It is significant here that the best of this work is firmly grounded in theory. In rhetoric, to use only one example, the ideas of Francis Christensen, Josephine Miles, Kenneth Pike, Wayne Booth, Walker Gibson, and James Moffett, among others, provide us with some better ways of teaching composition; their approaches reveal underlying similarities in dealing with writing as a mental, rhetorical, and linguistic act, and they have organized eloquently simple and highly teachable methods of presenting composition.

What are the specific ways to make myth relevant in the English program? I think we do so now, in our teaching of literature, whenever we reveal its power to form and interpret patterns of existence. (When more of the materials from curriculum centers become available, it will be interesting to see how myth has been handled in these sequences at the various grade levels.) Seldom, however, do we make assignments in language or composition which call for an identification of contemporary myths in the language of literature or society. Nor do we require

the student to make use of myths in his own writing. Though we use models for composition, myth seems too remote or too large a pattern to emulate. Perhaps it is really too close. Many teachers, of course, would regard assignments in narrative and metaphor as an ephemeral pursuit and an intrusion on the plain style. Whatever specific assignments one makes, the result should enable the student to use myth in his own thinking, speaking, reading, and writing, for the trouble is that "in the act of talking about structure we reify it into substance." [11]

Footnotes

1. Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 72.

2. James R. Squire, "Does the New English Demand a New English Education?", The Changing Role of English Education (Champaign, Illinois: N.C.T.E., 1965), p.81.

3. Commission on English, Freedom and Discipline (New York: College Entrance Examination Board, 1965), p. 53.

4. Susanne K. Langer, Philosophical Sketches (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), pp. 56 - 57.

5. Ernst Cassirer, Myth and Language (New York: Dover Publications, 1946), p. 98.

6. Northrop Frye, "Myth, Fiction, and Displacement", Daedalus, Summer, 1961.

7. Frye, op. cit., p. 350.

8. Ibid., p. 347 .

9. Henry Nash Smith, "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?", American Quarterly, Vol. IX (Summer, 1957), Part 2, University of Pennsylvania, p. 203.

10. Hayden Carruth, "People in a Myth," Hudson Review, 18, 4. (Winter, 1965-66), p. 608.

11. James Moffett, "A Structural Curriculum in English", Harvard Educational Review, 36, 1 (Winter, 1966), p. 18.

Study Group 6

On Myths and Translation

ABSTRACT:

One way of looking at what we did would be to see it as constructing a romance of prudence and scruple to go with Mr. Lavin's epic of possibilities. I have felt from the beginning that a most unfortunate side of this conference has been its essential lack of respect for Spenser. Mr. Holbrook has spoken contemptuously of him; Mr. Miller has not praised him--and I know what he once thought of him; and Mr. Jones has not retracted the remarks which he made about him on his previous visit to America. I, therefore, take my motto from Spencer. It is the tired, prudential motto given to Britomart--the chaste marshall of Britain's history--as she enters the myth-filled House where Amoret lies trapped by the myth and mythos of Cupid and Busirus: "BE BOLD, BE BOLD, BE NOT TOO BOLD." Our precepts--they are better told in the appendices which follow--could be said to go:

1. Be bold to read the myths to kids of every age--Irish, Norse, African, "Hebrew," classical; do not fear that the Latin schoolmaster will get you; be not so bold as to read nothing but ***.

2. Be bold to offer Psyche her mythy sacrifices; let her speak her tales in the voices of children; but be not so bold as to psychoanalyse. . .

3. You there, scallywags tied in the Cave of Modernity--get you some historical understanding of the "withered stumps of Time."

4. You there, half-dead-at-the-top in the same Cave--hear and understand the myths and mythoi that outsiders, underground and overhead--are making right now and use those stories to lead from myth to knowledge, dream to

perception.

5. Beware Archimago: myth study may itself become a semi-magical mythologizing--neither a science nor itself capable of giving order to study.

6. Beware Acratia; only the temperate man who knows that the "type is for the text, not the text for the type" can grab the rod of disciplined myth-crit and avoid making himself a pig.

7. Beware Orgoglio-Earth Pounder, for the study of myth requires delicacy, tact, and wit.

We may have seemed to have said, "Be not too bold, be not too bold, be a wee bit bold." But we did, all of us, know that Amoret's career covers the distance from Busyrane's house to the Garden of Cupid and Psyche and Venus and Adonis where the myths throw off a thousand fruitful forms with no help from anyone, least of all literary critics.

Another way of looking at our group--and to come off it--would be to say that our whole concern was "translation" in the widest sense: from language to language, past to present, belief to belief, man to man. And we recognized that the whole business of translation is to offer our students ways of looking at the world and valuing experience alternative to their own and to ours.

We had questions:

1. How does one lead from the implicit to the explicit in the understanding of myths and, indeed, of any stories whose artistic idiom is not native to our students?

2. How can scholarship do a better job of reconstructing the resonances and historical uses of the myths?

3. How can scholarship do a better job of reconstructing the idiom and mythoi which touch upon our student's perceptions of literature, English, and Education generally?

4. How can translation remain faithful to original idiom and be alive as new creation; how far should translation potentially useful to schools be given conscious encouragement?

Mostly we had talk, talk which led to the building of a kind of mosaic of what the problems of the area seem to be--what its usefulness may be. Some of the pieces in the mosaic belong to only one member of the group; most belong as if put by the group in general (though they are stated by an individual). People wrote when they had something to say. In the appendices which follow, the voices remain their owners'. The wooden questions are mine, put to remind the reader that what we had was a sort of low key symposium without Diotima and without Socrates.

Appendix I

What are the general limits and possibilities implicit in the use of myth and of myth criticism in constructing school programs?

I had better make it clear at the outset that I have no doubt that the study of Myth, both in the traditional and the modern, more extended, sense of that word, has a valuable part to play in education. Apart from deeper considerations, the sheer pleasurability of the paradigm-stories, and their indispensability as an ingredient in educated reading and writing, give them a necessary and valuable place among the teacher's resources. They are part of our common language and cultural heritage. Nor do I doubt that the profound sources of fiction and drama, even when seemingly "modern" and "realistic," lie in these myths or stories, and that any literature which seeks originality at the price of cutting itself off from them is going to sound thin and impoverished. So that I have no objection, but very much the contrary, to any course of education which includes fairy-tale, romance, legend, etc., as a large part of its staple diet of reading; nor to the teacher's being aware of, and being able to point out to students, the analogies and underlying affinities between these more primitive literary forms and the later, more sophisticated ones.

What I am afraid of is a too schematic approach and the offering of premature solutions as finalities--the result being to foster a kind of intellectual amateurism. I don't feel that the study of Myth has yet reached the stage of a Science. There are too many schools and doctrines, too little in the way of generally accepted canons of verification. Very often a "theory"

or "science" of Myth turns out to be an imaginative and ingenious suggestion or picture, a creative prompting--sometimes, as in Jung or Northrop Frye, it almost seems like a Myth itself. I don't doubt that the intelligent future teacher ought to have come across these ideas and been excited about them, and read for himself in the various authorities. But one thing he ought to take away from his reading is a sense of the great variety and disparity of the hypotheses that have been built around this undoubtedly fundamental domain of experience, and the very great difficulty of deciding between them (as we sometimes have to do, since they contradict each other) in particular instances. To take a concrete example: Freud interprets the Medusa in terms of castration-fear and frigidity, Sartre in terms of our fear of public opinion, people looking at us, etc. Since I'm writing from memory I'm no doubt over-simplifying and otherwise misrepresenting both Freud and Sartre, and I am not saying that their views of the Medusa, accurately stated, could not be reconciled, or regarded as <u>both</u> viable interpretations in some way, or for some purposes. But I take it that <u>if</u> we had to choose between them, <u>if</u> we had to decide which was the more "right"--and if we are never to do that, our studies are condemned to be permanently half-baked--we could not even begin to try to answer that question without a very wide exploration of Freud's or Sartre's whole system of thought, what are their general claims to attention in this field, what evidence they produced, what are their criteria for the use of evidence, etc., etc. What worries me is that all too often "interpretation" of a Myth is apt to mean merely the picking up of a bright idea or formulation from some thinker, irrespective of whether it fits in with other ideas we've picked up, or whether

it's only really discussible when related to that thinker's whole outlook, theoretical framework, conceptual system, technical vocabulary and so on. Thus at this conference I have heard cited as authorities in depth-psychology both Freud and the "heretics," Jung, Klein, etc., which, if orthodox analysts like Glover are right, the latter cannot be. And we must be familiar with the very influential school of critics which regards Freud himself as a Myth maker and literary man, appropriately awarded the Goethe Prize, a man of letters and poet rather than a scientist....

But I don't want to stray away into particular areas of controversy, only to remind you that the whole subject is controversial. It has not yet reached a stage in which the astronomers can be sorted out from the astrologers; at best, it is at a stage corresponding to that of Kepler, where modes of thought nowadays recognized as scientific coexist with astrological residues. That our subject provides opportunities for fancifulness or charlatanism no more discredits it than the existence of Gipsy Petulengro invalidates the study of the stellar universe; but it does (to me) suggest a certain reservation one might have about building a course around, e.g., a supposed analogy between the development of the human individual from childhood to maturity and an allegedly corresponding development in a civilization--or in "Civilization." (The criticisms that have been made of a somewhat similar procedure in Toynbee's Study of History are well known: the arbitrariness of his way of deciding what counts as "a civilization," the large element of the "creative" or fanciful in his treatment of historical facts in order to make them fit a predetermined pattern, and so on.) I am afraid that we might find ourselves saddled with a

ramshackle psychology and an anthropology which was once modish and has now become out of date--or, even worse, with an eclectic brew of factual observations, delightful fancies, and troublesome superstitions, which would become even more muddled and intellectually disreputable as it was passed from professor to teacher and from teacher to student.

Coming down to earth: I am urging that the book we dream of in this region of our studies is the equivalent of Darwin's Origin of Species, not of Yeats's A Vision. It is not likely to be vast and grandiose and in any flamboyant sense imaginatively exciting or ambitious; but it will be particularly and rigorously concerned with the criteria for verification, so that when it establishes something, that "something" stays established for quite a long time. The edifice may be modest, but it will be strongly built, so that the contending winds of doctrine will not blow it away; indeed, it may be a shelter from them.

I do not know of any work on literary Myth that meets this description, and I am not qualified to speculate on how it could be produced. What I am suggesting is that in the present state of the subject we would not be wise to pin our educational practice to any of the existing general theories of Myth. The raw material (the Myths themselves) is of priceless value, and I am in favour of any amount of immersion in them (though I would advocate a "mixed diet" in children's reading at all stages). I am more doubtful about giving them a privileged status in comparison with any other of the modes of metaphor which we have to learn in order to be able to deal with the world; still more about how we can begin to arbitrate among the relative degrees of "validity" claimed

by the different schools which interpret them (anthropological, psychoanalytical, and so on).

Appendix II

What are the pitfalls for teaching style which the study of myth might present?

May I plead for the greatest tact and restraint on the part of all who have any part in the passing on to students of ideas and knowledge about myth? Here is a fascinating and still in large part unexplored territory; let's explore it and encourage the young to go for canoe trips a little way into the unknown. But there lurks a pocket Aristotle in each of us who longs to go in and survey, map, classify, and parcel out the unknown. The result may be at times more than we ourselves can digest, but

"The fascination of what's difficult"

is hard to resist, and the human exploring urge takes many forms. Where I do feel uneasy, however, is in education. The canoe will just sink if it is overloaded. And we should never forget that the ultimate objective in literature is a better understanding of the individual work of art, beginning and also ending with its uniqueness. It has many relations with other works of art; its roots go deep into the past; it relates to the human situation. A better understanding of its uniqueness involves, very often, reference and comparison; but there must be time in which to view the ultimate whole, and vision to view it with. The first danger with myth is that to study it or to introduce it into education may take up time which is not there, then the vision may atrophy. The second danger is that so much in such a field as myth is concerned with what Robert Lowe, that great Philistine, called "impalpable essences." Myth implies more often than not an echo here, a veiled allusion there, something half heard which you may fairly guess at but never quite mas-

ter; it is often of a Delphic ambiguity. The overtones are important in music precisely because they are overtones and the young ought to grow up with their sense of wonder unimpaired. This does not mean reticence on the teacher's part; on the contrary, it may often mean the minute setting the score rather than the hour crossing the t's; the odd remark which explains what may need explaining without insulting the student's intelligence, the comment that may start him thinking.

This is where myth comes into education--and into poetry. I, for one, love its complexities; I respect its impalpable "essence"; I believe that the ultimate aim of myth, as of poetry, is to give pleasure.

Appendix III

To what extent should explicit training in the techniques of contemporary myth criticism and searching for archetypes be part of the school program? (From Bel Kaufman's Up the Down Staircase: Why do we study The Myths? Because we want to talk like cultured people. . .we want to know how our civilization got that way. . . to learn what it was like to live in the golden age with all the killings. . . .If it wasn't for Myths where would Shakesper (sic) be today?)

As far as I can see, nearly all literature, good and bad, can be reduced to some myth or other, more or less undestructively. The reasons for having a study group on myth still appear obscure: I would have thought that a discussion of the teaching of History or Story would have been more central, lucid, and useful. Since there seems to be a lot of myth teaching going on, with varying accounts of stages and ages, needs and demands--for the very young? for the adolescent? for the undergraduate--and almost anything seems to go, let me suggest that myth should be unstressed, taught at all ages, taught implicitly and explicitly, but that we should be careful to mix the genres, since collecting many very conspicuously mythy stories seems likely to lead the student away from the essential features of a work of literature, its individuality or particularity, into a dry preoccupation with typicality. Abstracts and outlines can have the same tendency to reduce literary experience to a dry schematism. Psychology, philosophy, and anthropology can do quite nicely to introduce children of all ages to the broad outlines of concepts of humanity; what is essentially the definitive quality of literature is the presentation of individual character, feeling, event. This will presumably always be based on a scaffolding of myth, and the scaffolding will, in some fiction and drama and poetry,

be very visible but not in all.

Myth seems to me to be most appropriately taught at the graduate level, when students have accumulated a large enough repertoire of literary forms and experiences to be able to do their classifying without too much mere taking-over of other people's categories; when they can discuss the very sophisticated question of degrees of mythical conspicuousness; and when they are in a position to pick their way with some discretion amongst the psychological accounts of myth and its functions. At all earlier levels, myth teaching of any formal kind, including the concentrated myth-syllabus at any age up to about 23, seems rash off-centre, likely to train historians, anthropologists, collectors of nuggets of facts, insensitive to the important things that literature can do, and likely to be very adept misreaders of texts, reading for scaffolding instead of type, missing the stream of action by going for the "mythiest" events. The teacher of literature should surely aim at encouraging students to relate literature to life, but only via the particularities, not the schemata, of both literature and life. This applies not merely to a Frye-ish reduction or classification but to more inventive and freer jobs of myth-making: classifying events and characters in terms of modern concepts such as the Outsider. This, too, may have its value, but it is a sophisticated operation demanding more sociology and literary discrimination than any young student can possess. It is also such fun when played really gaily (see Leslie Fiedler or Richard Chase) that it can effectively seduce readers and critics from looking hard and fully at the poems and stories as they are. This entails looking at detail, in language, action, and character. If, for instance, we take the

Persephone myth, we might eagerly group together Middlemarch, Lady Chatterley's Lover, No Orchids for Miss Blandish, and Lolita. Almost any story involving imprisonment and rescue could and perhaps should be typed as a spring-myth in this category. For an advanced student, there might be some value in saying this, providing that it was said in the process of sorting out the differences between such works, for the purposes of judgment and interpretation. The advantages and disadvantages need no labouring. The question of the value of myth-spotting is raised in a more sensitive way, however, if we look at some details in Middlemarch and Lady Chatterley.

In Middlemarch, there is the central imprisonment and rescue; there is some pointing from imagery of vegetation and climate, and some from imagery of darkness and light, tombs, godlike radiance, etc. There are some classical emphases, too. In Lady Chatterley, there is a much clearer and singular reference to the Persephone story while George Eliot jumbles the myths: we have Theseus and Ariadne crossing with Persephone. D.H. Lawrence actually refers to Connie as Persephone "out of hell on a cold morning," the vegetation symbolism gets into the action, as small precipitating events and as amorous ritual. More important, the structure of the novel has a cyclical suggestion which puts it closely in relation to the spring-myth: it is about the sexual and seasonal rhythms, and takes us to the winter of chastity with some look ahead towards spring. The use of the myth is tentative, of course, and D.H. Lawrence does not set the cycle in action; he merely runs through it once and suggests the process which may work. The brakes are applied to the imagined return of spring, for reader and Mellors: this is a Tragic Age. But if we compare Lady Chatterley with Middlemarch or Portrait of a Lady, the really mythological qualities

of the rhythm seem apparent. Now: we are teachers, not just critics having fun finding things out about structure and language. What do we say about the myth in the story that is relevant to the teaching of literature to the study of particular books? We can do, as I have already suggested, the work of using the typicality in order to assert the particularity: this needs no elaborating, and would involve a full look at surfaces, structure, character, and all kinds of detail. But is the use of myth-spotting only a negative one? I think we should observe that Lawrence uses a subordinated but visible mythical connection in order to do several things--to place his Tragic Age in history--the myth sees the industrial revolution as a rape of nature, and this is causally as well as symbolically important in the book. The book is about myth: can we have spring-myths any more? The myth also works to make particular characters and events poignant because of a shift of perspective: Connie's desolation and escape from hell on a cold morning are made very diminutive, and, yet, Lawrence manages to keep his feeling for her as a woman, without reducing her to illustration. This is the feeling for humanity, only testable and visible in a felt individual case. Joyce has many similar deepenings of feeling, among which I would pick out Paddy Dignam and the darkness and dignity of Hades behind the dailiness of the Irish funeral.

It seems to be possible to keep something in myth criticism for the teacher of literature, not just to chuck it all over to the anthropologists and historians. The important thing seems to be to use myth-criticism in the work of laying bare individuality--observations that are only concerned with typicality take us straight out of literature into history or elsewhere. But there are many other problems facing the myth-critic. What about a very much

more subordinated use of myth, as in Middlemarch. It is easier to say how myth functions in Lawrence, where it is strongly visible, than in the more shadowy and marginal appearances in George Eliot and Henry James. Where it is shadowy it really seems no more important than other kinds of historical or literary allusion, and the dangers of pushing it into a conspicuous position by grouping explicitly or implicitly is even greater. I do not want to suggest that one could generalize from the Lawrence example. In Yeats' "Lullaby" myth makes a different appearance, being revived with all the power of feeling, so that it is in fact taken out of typicality and given a restoration to particulars. Plainly, Yeats does other things, too, with myth, and with myth invented as well as received from tradition. It is always the dwelling on detail, not on the mythological classification, that is essential, but this dwelling on detail will be different in different cases. In a potentially reductive process like myth-criticism, we should be especially wary of making one act of particular analysis into a stereotype for future acts.

Appendix IV

What is the place of translated material in the schools? Do we lose the mythos in the translation of a work from another time or culture?

It is not a question of whether or not to introduce translated works into the English class; they are already there, beginning with the Bible. The questions are, rather, what kinds of translations, why, when, and where?

Those who want as little translation as possible seem to base their point of view on two main grounds; both appear more articulately expressed in the U.S. than in the U.K.[1] The first reason for misgiving about translation is that it would be better to study the original. Of course. But in a crowded curriculum the U.S. teacher of English would hardly welcome back to the fold, probably at his own expense, the now almost extinct teacher of Greek, in order that boys might read as they still do in some schools in England, France, and Germany, Plato's Republic in the original. As for contemporary languages, there does indeed seem the strongest possible reason for encouraging and enabling far more students to acquire the ability and desire (equally important) to read originals. Nobody who could read Candide in the original should be satisfied with a translation. But Beowulf, Don Quixote, The Mabinogion, The Song of Roland, The Icelandic Sagas are unlikely to be studied in the original by students under 18 anyhow. Such books seem to have a good deal to offer to such students, both in terminal courses which may offer the only introduction they will ever know and in college-based courses too--here the Brunerian spiral may well apply at times, and to read Pound's version of The Seafarer at 15 might be the prelude to an interest in Old English later on. Because a boy reads translations more

[1] But the possibilites are only just beginning to be recognized in, e.g., examination syllabuses.

he will not necessarily read originals less.

Clearly the vital need is for close cooperation between teachers of English and teachers of languages in a given school. Their common aim is the education of the single student; English of all subjects is not "inter," an "island unto itself." Have English teachers done all that they might to meet the teacher of other languages in discussion of such matters? Perhaps the Modern Language Association is uniquely qualified to deal with such matters; or has it already done so?

But there is a second major objection to the use of translations. This is that so much is lost in the translating that the ultimate product is not worth reading. Of course, one can distinguish here between what the Germans call "Nachdichtung" and more hackneyed efforts. The best translations, such as Chapman's Homer, or Shelley's version of Sappho's poem, or the Pound poem mentioned above have real quality in themselves; less exalted efforts such as, in the U.S., Ennis Rees's translations of the Iliad and Odyssey may often be a good deal better as literature than some of the reading concurrently going on in the mother tongue. Thus only the very pure purist who is so royal in his approach that even a small pea of education under his cultural mattress would disturb him all night, is on very strong grounds in pressing this kind of objection.

In any case, perhaps the most important of all reasons for considering translation seriously lies in what the translations have to tell us. Of course, in the light of eternity what and how, subject and style represent different and inseparable aspects of the same thing. The child who is introduced to the

substance of Beowulf, however well told, is not getting the whole thing. But we do not despise the man who gazes at the Parthenon because he cannot see it in its original gilded glory; the T'Ang sculpture of ancient China, everywhere in fragments, can still say something even though most of us know woefully little about China under the T'Ang Dynasty. So with translation, half a loaf is a gift to the hungry. And there does, deep down, seem a hunger of the spirit for what some of the translated work can tell us.

For it is through the originals of such work in the past and the translation in the present that much of the underlying message of our civilization and culture--not only in its West European aspects--has been transmitted. This transmission and the context of what is transmitted may take many forms; one of the most vivid, and certainly one of the most important, is that which comes roughly under the heading of myth. You do not need to be a Homer scholar to find a story such as that of Odysseus and Polyphemus not only haunting in itself but also surprisingly relevant in all kinds of ways for our own generation.

Appendix V

Can modern psychoanalytic approach to myth inform our understanding of literature and of the creative work of our students?

In his treatment of myth, the English teacher must be sensitive to the psychological as well as the formal literary qualities of the "archetype." In fact, it can be argued that the ultimate or remote source of aesthetic pleasure is the archetype, for it embodies in dramatic form the essential paradoxes and predicaments of human identity. The word archetype means "implanted from the beginning," and for Jung the term applies to the residual forms of numberless experiences of the same kind which have been embedded in the racial memory. Whether or not we agree with the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious is not important; the significant point is that archetypal patterns do appear in the mythologies of cultures widely separate in space and time. These experiences are formulated in stories of death and rebirth, sexual duality, mother earth and heavenly father, the Promethean struggle with the gods, the search for an ultimate illumination, etc. Considered as perennial patterns of human behavior which recur in ever-shifting historical variations, these archetypal images of experience can amplify the student's power to explain his own world, to bridge its inner and outer dimensions. Much of the appeal in myth derives from the fears and fantasies every child experiences, as part of the way he defines himself. Literature is perhaps one of the best ways we have of coping with the tensions of identity, those problems of the "me and the not me"; the agonies of growth are made bearable, even productive, through the vicarious enactment of them in the child who hears and reads nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and myths.

The teacher, then, should be aware of the sequence of tensions in the child's life. Beyond that, he should anticipate them, preparing a structure of stories and writing assignments which will account for those successive tensions. (See Eric Erikson's Childhood and Society.)

The teacher, however, would be unwise to limit his study of myth to any one psychological doctrine; on the contrary, the danger for the myth enthusiast is that his teaching may drift toward a fantastical learning or merely diffuse pedantry. In either case, he deprives his students of the primary transaction, the pleasure of engaging the unique character of the individuated art work.

Appendix VI

What problems do specifically "modern" readings of the myths present and what may be gained from efforts to make historical reconstructions of their resonances?

One of the significant questions in the study of myth is the question of the degree to which education can appropriate the narratives of distant people for its purposes and still leave them the narratives of "other" people. This is, of course, not merely a matter of literary approaches but of our capacity to exercise the historical imagination and to be open to the visions and valuations of other cultures and individuals. Our natural tendency may be to see, in the Polyphemus story, at least two of the concerns of modern psychotherapy, the symbolizing of a quest for identity and the symbolizing of a concomitant confrontation with the adult, perhaps the parent of the opposite sex, seen as enemy (the giant, to use our Polyphemus instance). However, to see so is not to see the story from the perspective of the civilization which created it. Or probably not. This is not to say that there is only one right reading of Homer nor is it to commit the intentional fallacy and say that the only Odyssey is one which existed in the intention of Homer. It is rather to work to reconstruct the "logic" of an idiom and way of conceiving embodied in this particular Greek fabulous narration and the "history" which surrounds it and to see in which ways that "logic" differs from the "logic" which we posit as giving us a key to the fabulous narrations which we dream (--"to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life"). Let me get down to cases.

From the perspective of the reading given last time, Odysseus' shout, "Tell him your eye was put out by Odysseus, Sacker of Cities, the Son of Laertes, who lives in Ithaca" comes as the triumphant climax of the scene in which Odysseus and Polyphemus blast at one another; from another perspective, that furnished by the rest of the story and what we know of ancient Greek mythos, the shout is a low point. It signals a momentary and disastrous foolishness on the part of a man previously versatile enough to tell his antagonist that he is No Man. That we know that twenty years on Calypso's isle come with the echo of the shout tells us either that to discover one's identity is, in the logic of this narration, mighty dangerous or that another kind of logic is operative here. I would say, "Another kind of logic" and do so on the basis of efforts to make a historical reconstruction of the Homeric mythos as well as on the evidence of the rest of the Homeric text. Archeology and anthropology tell us that Homeric people regarded the act of telling another man one's name as giving him power over one; a versatile Odysseus not only tells Polyphemus that he is No Man but once returned to Ithaca he tells no one, friend or enemy, his name until Ithaca is in his power. Even in the case of Telemachus, he establishes his kinship to his son before he allows his name to be mentioned. The chastened Odysseus who comes to Ithaca has an identity but one discovered in the marks of his body and the marks of what his body can do.

If I read the ancient fable correctly, what happens with Polyphemus' shout is that the identity fixed in a scar, a capacity to pull a bow, etc., is momentarily replaced by the self-naming brag. And if I read the differences

in times correctly, this sense of the need to conceal named identity to preserve real identity, the sense of identity as bodily identity, is central to the Homeric mythos and absent from ours. Hercules' wraith and Hercules are separated in Book XI, as are Elpenor and his body, but that is the only place in the Odyssey where the grammar of Homer's language suggests the possibility of the separation of the self and the body, of personal and bodily identity. "Death for Homer is the loss of all vital physical power, a shadowy impotence that replaces vigor, action, personality, and sunshine;" Homer's "ghost" is the body that survives the fire and searches for blood and life. Identity as the assertion of our unique inwardness and of the "name" which goes with that inwardness, the sense of the "self" as a discovered and developed thing, seems to me to be significant in the mythos of modern groups organized more loosely than the Homeric tribe, groups taught by religious and philosophic tradition to see the "I-ness" of the "I" as an inward (self-developed) ghost--the self which "really" goes with the name.

These remarks are directed toward raising the question of the place of the use of myth in the development of what I have called the historical imagination. It is surely accurate to say that what the modern imagination, perhaps even the imagination of a child, finds objectified in the Polyphemus episode is the sense that we may altogether cease to be. Big Daddy may smother us. It is also possible that the myth so envisaged and understood--whether consciously or unconsciously--may find an important place in the education and the civilizing of the child, the welding together of inner and outer worlds. And it would be unfair to say that a reading from the perspective of our dreaming does at every level

shift the emphasis of the story, for the sense that it is about the constraints of law and of "lawlessness" in the world of desire or that it is about the dark fear of strangers and aliens is surely constant in every period. Let us not be pedants on purpose. "The New wine is good and useful to education." "Fine; if so, let us drink it." My fear is that the search in ancient fable for the fantasies which modern men dream, if pursued too exclusively, may leave us without visions alternative to our present ones: "Let us also guzzle the old wine," I would say.

I want to bring in two pictures of the myths and visions of those "others." I want to see them as wineskins which each group--and, to some degree, each person--in part fills with its own wine, mixing it with the wines of the last vintners. I want also to see them as a series of languages or language games, the idiom of which must be reconstructed for each period. The work of Pepin, De Lubac, Buffiere, Carcopino, Cumont, Seznec, Smalley, Wind, Panofsky, Jaegar, etc. has in part done the job of reconstructing the metamorphoses of content which the stories central to the classical and Biblical mythos have known. But the job is not done even for classical and Biblical cultures; it is by no means done for African, Asian, or American Indian myths as these enter the English stream. If the job were done, its relevance to education, as opposed to pedantry, may be unclear.

Let me suggest some relevances.

First, the content of a passage may shift as we imagine our way out of our total vision of what Chapman calls "these childish toys." Polyphemus has been read--in various ages--as barbarism, volcanic energy, pride, presumption,

lawlessness, etc.; similarly, Milton's Lucifer has received Jungian and Freudian as well as Shelleyan and Blakean readings. But if the Lucifer of Books I, II, V, and VI is seen sui generis as playing against the epic typicality provided by a Renaissance Polyphemus, and if one knows the available meanings of Polyphemus and the giants as read by the Renaissance myth mongers--if he knows that they may be hubris become superbia in the new mythos--then Lucifer's size, his raising up against the heavens, his "cave," his throwing of the hills and so forth have a substance different in kind from that provided by Lucifer-as-father-and-enemy or as-Prometheus. Some of the joy of fooling with Paradise Lost in the battle scenes comes from seeing Lucifer as both Polyphemus and inverted-Hector, from perceiving the puffed up anti-epic inside the "real" epic. And this sense comes from participating in a vision different from Homer's heroic military one and from our egocentric, competitive one.

Second, the tone of a passage may shift. If we know what "blind Cupid" means in the Renaissance mythos about the meaning of Roman myths, then Helena's speech in A Midsummer's Night's Dream comes to be potentially a more complex--and ironically delightful--affair:

> Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind
> And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind,
> Nor has Love's mind for any judgment taste,
> Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste.

As every Renaissance painter knows and as Helena forgets, Cupid is blind because he is turned on, crazy--irrational. Helena's Cupid looks with the "pure" mind, the mind purified of all judgment. The shift from gush to irony may be congenial to our student audiences.

Third, the sense of the artfulness or economy of a passage may change. Pluto guards the circle of the money-grubbers in the Inferno; as god of winter and sterility, he seems a bit odd for them. Critics have wanted to make him Plutus to redeem Dante's classicism. But the god of winter is, of course, not Dante's Pluto--rather the Pluto who meant "possession" of the "abundance" which is Proserpina. To import Dante's medieval Pluto and his Proserpina into Lawrence and Lady Chat would be pretty obviously to import the wrong figures; but the reverse process is easy, the projecting back from present mythos and presently assigned resonances. To know Venus as possibly meaning the amorous or desiring passion and Mars as the wrathful or frustrated one is to see a tremendous number of details of machinery, characterization, and plot potentially fall into place in the Knight's Tale; to know Molly Bloom as an earth mother, given the value that earth mothers are assigned these days, is to change our sense both of the comedy and of the decorum of Joyce's handling of her.

Fourth, to know where the equivalences assigned to myth are unchanging or changing is to give the student a beginning grip on Western literature as a stable or changing--as a related--order of visions. Thus, Narcissus over his pool is somehow in Ovid a metaphor for the softness and watery dreaminess in a flower and perhaps also for the moral idea which Frankel finds in Ovid's story; in Christian ages, Narcissus is an image of that self-love which is the source of guilt and loneliness--potentially significant to reading say the Romance of the Rose, Cynthia's Revels, or Milton's picture of Eve over the pool. And in French symbolist poetry, does not Narcissus become the image of that artistic self-contemplation which permits one to see and to beautify the world? Freudian Narcissism has yet another meaning and set of conceptual

connections. Consider, also, the use to which Narcissus is put in the following remark by Yukie Mishima: "What I didn't realize until I went to Greece was that creating a beautiful book and becoming a beautiful person involved the same moral standard. Only the Greeks understood that really; it explains narcissism--in all good men there's a bit of the narcissist." And what shall we say of Pope's Belinda: in what theological or social mythos shall we place Belinda-as-Narcissus; what lights and counterlights from new enlightenings and old shadows shine in that mirror?

There are, I think, major problems for education implicit in any discussion of the transformations of myth and the development of the historical imagination. I cannot solve them.

I would plunk for a knowledge of the major myths and of their metamorphoses in time past. I do not know how this knowledge can be given in an elegant and graceful way or how it can be made a living part of the young student's perception of literary works and of the objects and situations on which their visions press. But I am quite sure that, unless we can ask that students so penetrate the mythic fables so that they both are and mean as they were and meant to past times and other places, we cannot expect myth to be a criticism of life except on our terms. I would like it to be on the terms provided by the language of other times and places.

Appendix VII

Can education take account of modern operative social myths and mythoi, and how shall it do so?

"You don't even know who you are," Reginald had said. "You don't even know, the white devil has hidden it from you, that you are a race of people of ancient civilizations, and riches in gold and kings. You don't even know your true family name, you couldn't recognize your true language if you heard it."

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

"A race of giants had lived there, fearless men, men of a staunchness unknown in this day. Jody thought of the wide places and of the wagons moving across like centipedes. He thought of Grandfather on a huge white horse, marshaling the people. . ./Later the grandfather says. . ./ "I tell these old stories but they're not what I want to tell. . . . It wasn't Indians that were important, nor adventures, nor even getting out here. It was a whole bunch of people made into one big crawling beast. And I was the head."

John Steinbeck, "The Leader of the People"

One of the justifications for creating a study group on myth and translating may be this: that pressing intensely on these two subjects simultaneously has forced us to raise issues as regards education and the idiom of literature "which does not belong to us" in the widest sense. We have been made to look at the problems of bridging past and present, distant and near, non-English and English. But the job of translating a literary work or com-

municating the resonances of a myth may be complicated not only by the linguistic difference and mythic distance of the work studied. It may also be complicated by the differences of mythos and differences in language which separate us from our students. Operative mythoi created in our time such as Elijah Muhammed's version of the creation and history of the human race (cf. The Autobiography of Malcolm X, paper edition, pp. 161-185) may seem as distant from us as Homer or the Amahuaca myths. A job of "translating" is needed if our students are to reach us, and we our students. The student to whom such a vision means something must surely perceive the symbolism and language of most literature as well as the content of his classroom experience from a perspective radically different from that of the grove of academe even as, more subtly, a student raised with the American frontier myth of "westering, westering" may find it difficult to penetrate Dante's dream of a westering Ulysses as deserving the lower circle; the Nazi mythos is probably not conducive to an understanding of the realm of satire. And not only do the social mythoi touch on the way in which we and our students see literature, they touch on us--on our deepest valuations of the meanings of things and concomitantly, on our (and our students') capacities "to speak the meanings words will never know/But man imagined images can show." (Hypocrite Auteur).

Operative myths and mythoi are a business of education. The sense in which they are raises complicated problems. They seem to tempt one to be the social engineer, fake psychologist, and bibliotherapist, on the one hand; they seem, on the other, to mock our incapacity (as teachers and scholars) to speak to such imaginings of students as really affect the way they live. We don't

know our way here, but some suggestions may be in order: First, the literature teacher's direct assaults on destructive elements in operative myth--racist postures of Nazi propaganda or Nation of Islam demonology--are probably wasted rhetoric. The Science class is the place to hit superstition. The business of the English teacher is not, primarily, to "demythologize"--whatever the mythology.

Second, the English teacher must know the operative myths of his students and their neighbors. This will take educational and literary research into the sociology of explicit religious narrative, folklore, underground narrative, graffiti of "outsider" groups, etc. Hopefully, education will reject the picture of the schools as agents of "squarism" which comes to the fore in Mr. Douglas's picture of the dominant educational philosophy of the twenties.

Third, one function of the study of English may be to allow the student to represent--at some level of indirect representation--his or his group's idiosyncratic vision of what makes the world tick; that vision may be hateful to the teacher; he should remember that Homer's vision is also a vision that allows for racism, barbarism, and slavery. Time pardons Homer for writing all things well and for seeing many well. The teacher may be able to ask the student to do with his mythoi what Yeats asked himself to do with his wife's--that is, the teacher may be able to ask the student to use the writing of stories, poems, etc. to deepen his perception of the world in terms of the belief of his group, checking in the process belief against experience and experience in terms of belief, until mythos gives or experience is "seen" clearly--until the teacher is able to "pardon" the student for writing and seeing well.

Fourth, education should recognize that any narrative, any picture, by an individual or group which attempts to say "the world is put together so and means this to me" can become, and be used as, the basis for the search for confirmative evidence. The process of education always begins as ignorant vision, and Elijah's ignorant vision apparently did for Malcolm X what the schools never could do--led him to a "probe of what the world is about"--into Herodotus, Homer, Toynbee, and H.G. Wells; into history and science, anthropology and archeology. We work from within outward, if we work at all.

Fifth, it is a matter for research to discover whether the student can best be brought to an understanding of literature if he begins with works which embody his myths, with works which are "parallel" to it, with works which present alternative pictures, or with works which present the most different possible picture. We need to know what we can "translate" and how; the myths of India, Africa, and South America may speak to one group; Blake or Jiminez to another; Homer and St. John Perse to another. The student who has been taught to fancy a set of lies may learn to see from an alien vision if, and perhaps only if, the vision does not come from the "devils" who are his enemies. (We may need contrastive studies of literary symbolism and in-group social symbolism to enable us to do a better job of literary "translation.")

Sixth, education should recognize its obligations to foster the total literary process--including the oral story-telling process. It is idle to talk about the fabulous stories which Homer and his Myceneans were building up to deepen their sense of the meaning and purpose of life while we ignore or suppress comparable processes going on in modern society. The "myth of the

frontier" informs popular American entertainment; it informs the way in which people in certain parts of America see their pasts, the meaning of their futures, and the meaning of literature (cf. Jody's grandfather); it can also be the basis for perceptive writing. Malcolm's sense that he came from a nation rich in gold and kings was the beginning of an education of imagination which led from madness to clarity and from weakness to strength. Surely, the teaching of English can build on such imaginings.